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RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7659
RUEHC/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4705
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0533
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5036
RUEHM/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6342
RUEHQ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7322
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 2085
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 1812
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000981

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2019
TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM PINR OFDP OTRABL
SUBJECT: GOB DELAYS, DENIES ISSUANCE OF OFFICIAL VISAS

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Holly Monster for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Since September 2008, the Bolivian government has increasingly delayed, and in some cases denied, issuance of official visas to incoming USG personnel. While the majority of visa requests are still granted without significant delay, a higher percentage of applications than normal (and those of military personnel especially) appear to be undergoing more scrutiny than usual. The information in this cable, while incomplete, provides a record of issuance delays and denials from post's Marine Security Guard detachment, SouthCom, USAID, diplomatic couriers, and State. Some reports indicate the Bolivian Consul has said visas must be approved by authorities in La Paz prior to issuance, which may partially account for the delays. End summary.

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Marine Security Guard Detachment: Delays
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¶2. (C) On January 14, Marine Security Guard Captain Aaron Awtry requested a visa from the Miami Bolivian Consulate for a TDY to perform an inspection scheduled for February. He received the visa in the first week of April.

¶3. (C) On December 9, 2008, Marine Security Guard Regional Commander John Yanvary and First Sergeant Leslie Thomas applied for visas at the Bolivian Consulate in Miami for a TDY to perform an inspection scheduled for December 2008. First Sergeant Thomas retired before receiving the visa, while Commander Yanvary received his visa in the first week of May.

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SouthCom: Delay and Denial
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¶4. (C) On February 23, CDR Michael Cheetham applied for a visa at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC. The visa was rejected on March 10.

¶5. (C) On February 9, Mr. Charles Koutras, a civilian from the Army Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, applied for a visa at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC, but neglected to include the appropriate visa application. On February 13 he provided

the correct application via fax. On February 20, in response to a request from the Bolivian Consul, he provided a copy of his itinerary. He received the visa on March 6.

¶6. (C) On January 6, SOUTHCOM analyst Matthew Whalen applied for a visa from the Bolivian Consulate in Miami for a trip scheduled to start on January 18. The individual received a visa and was able to travel on January 20. The Bolivian Consul in Miami informed the individual that all visa requests from US SOUTHCOM had to be approved by the Bolivian MFA.

¶7. (C) In October 2008, two technicians, (Dan Borales and Jaime Ruiz) applications for visas at the Bolivian Consulate in Miami were delayed and eventually withdrawn.

¶8. (C) A follow-on SOUTHCOM NEO team of between 10 and 13 individuals, all military, applied for visas in September 2008 at the Bolivian Consulate in Miami; these requests were denied immediately. A note was sent from the front office to the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the group was instructed by the MFA to reapply and the MFA provided assurances that the visas would be granted. The group reapplied, again in September at the Miami Bolivian Consulate, and was denied a second time, again immediately.

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USAID: Delay and Denial
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¶9. (C) On January 15 a USAID official, T. David Johnston applied for a visa from the Bolivian Embassy in WDC. On January 16, the Bolivian Embassy requested additional information, which was sent by fax. On February 2 the USAID office was informed that the Bolivian Consul was still waiting for instructions from La Paz. On February 6, the Bolivian Consul in WDC informed the individual seeking the visa that he was unable to provide a visa without the approval of Vice Chancellor Hugo Fernandez at the MFA. The MFA faxed a diplomatic note to the US Embassy in La Paz denying the visa on February 6. The explanation provided by the MFA via diplomatic note on February 12 was that they were concerned about this visit because the visa application noted that the purpose of the TDY was to review & strategic issues, the MFA noted that this needed to be coordinated with the GOB as USAID programs were under review by the GOB. USAID officials responded via diplomatic note on February 17 to point out that this exercise had been fully vetted at GOB technical levels. Subsequently the Charg, DCM and USAID director met with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Hugo Fernandez to clarify this issue, and the visa was issued.

¶10. (C) On June 12, the Bolivian Embassy in WDC told the USAID Travel Office that they could not approve a visa for incoming Acting USAID Mission Director Kermit Moh until they received orders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mission Director Peter Natiello spoke with Vice Minister Hugo Fernandez, who in turn coordinated issuance of the visa.

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State: Delays
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¶11. (C) On January 21, COMSEC auditor Michael D. Larson, applied for an official visa. After some delays, the individual called the Bolivian Embassy in Washington DC and was told that they were waiting for instructions from La Paz.

On January 29 this individual cancelled his application and cancelled his scheduled trip to Bolivia.

¶12. (C) On January 15, four individuals applied for officials visas at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC: Donald E. Messick, Paul McIndoe, Jeffrey Knight and Ramiro Rodriguez. These visas were granted in the first week of February, but too late for the individuals to travel as planned.

¶13. (C) On December 22, 2008, Laura Truitt applied for an official visa at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC. Ms. Truitt

received her visa on January 22. On December 15, 2008, Annie Trenton applied for an official visa at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC. Ms. Trenton received her visa on January 22. On December 11, 2008, Randy Cruz applied for an official visa at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC. Mr. Cruz received his visa on January 16. On December 8, 2008, Kevin Walton applied for an official visa at the Bolivian Embassy in WDC. Mr. Walton received his visa on January 26.

¶14. (C) On May 7, intern Michelle Morales called the Bolivian Consulate in New York City to confirm requirements for a specific-purpose visa to complete an 11-week internship at Embassy La Paz. She was told the visa would not be issued without an original notarized letter from the Embassy explaining the purpose of her trip. This conflicted with previous correspondence in which she was told that a letter of invitation from main State in WDC would be acceptable. Post contacted the MFA, which confirmed that a letter from WDC would be sufficient to obtain a visa. The officer at the Bolivian Consulate in New York refused to accept this information. As a result Ms. Morales traveled to the Bolivian Embassy in WDC at her own expense to obtain her visa, which she received within a day.

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Diplomatic Couriers: Delays
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¶15. (C) On December 18, 2008, a visa was requested for diplomatic courier Mark Sherwood from the Bolivian Embassy in Washington DC. On January 21, the diplomatic couriers, office received approvals for this visa, and for two additional (and not delayed) applications, each for one year, in place of the customary 90 days.

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